

[Mrs. John Donnelly]

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FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Frederick W Kaul L. A. Rollins ADDRESS Hastings, Neb.

DATE Nov. 1938 SUBJECT Folklore

1. Name and address of informant Mrs. John Donnelly, Hastings, Neb.
2. Date and time of interview Nov. 1938
3. Place of interview residence
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant none
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you
none
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Small neat cottage which she owns. House inside and out in good repair. Everything neat and clean. Furniture, etc., old but all in good condition. Home in modern.

FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Frederick W Kaul L A Rollins ADDRESS Hastings, Nebr.

DATE Nov. 1938 SUBJECT Folklore

Library of Congress

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Mrs. John Donnelly, Hastings, Nebr.

1. Ancestry Irish

2. Place and date of birth Balley Matz, Ireland, Aug. 17, 1861

3. Family 4 sons, 2 daughters living

4. Place lived in, with dates

Ireland, Fairbury, Ill, Sutton, Nebr., Hastings, Nebr.

5. Education, with dates

Grade school in Ireland, Country school at Fairbury, Ill.

6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates

Housekeeping, Gardening, Farming

7. Special skills and interests

Gardening, Poultry raising

8. Community and religious activities

Catholic Church

9. Description of informant

Healthy, alert, active. Very short and very stooped.

10. Other points gained in interview

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FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER Frederick W Kaul L A Rollins ADDRESS Hastings, Nebr.

DATE Nov. 1938 SUBJECT Folklore

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Mrs. John, 1417 West 6th st., Hastings, Nebr.

Copies attached of interview

Federal Writers' Project

Frederick W Kaul—L A Rollins

Hastings, Nebraska.

Source:

Mrs. John Donnelly, 1417 West 6, St.,

Hastings, Nebraska.

Pioneer Life in Nebraska —

Northern Lights —

“ I was born in Balley Matz, Ireland in 1861. My folks came to America in my early childhood, settling at Fairbury, Illinois. During the Chicago fire, it was in the fall of 1871, we came to Sutton, Nebraska and filed on a homestead, seven miles southwest of the town. The country was all open prairie. Our nearest neighbor lived 1 1/2 miles distant. We had built a sod house and broke a small patch of land with our oxen and planted corn and garden stuff. We had plenty of rain and everything grew. We got corn and lots of vegetables. We made a cellar and stored our vegetables in it for the winter.

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We usually had corn bread on our table. Prairie chickens were plentiful. They provided us with meat. Of course the men had to go out and shoot them. But there were so many that they always got some. Our vegetables lasted till the next summer.

We had no papers to read in those days. The neighbors would all come together at one place this Sunday and then at another the next until they had made the round. Then they would do this over and over again. This way we got all the news. The neighbors would talk over their work, experiences and plans. The children would romp about the place, play and enjoy themselves. In their more gay moods, the old folks would sing such old songs as: Golden Slippers, Silver Threads, When you and I were young, Home Sweet Home, Kitty wells (a negro [son?] song) and many others.

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They were all happier than people are today.

At first there was no school in the neighborhood. After a few years, we built a small school building. We had three mouths of school during the year. Reading, writing, arithmetic and geography was taught. Most of the pupils learned to read write and figure enough to get them through the world at that time. We didn't need much of the foolishness taught in schools nowadays.

We were Catholics. At first we had no services. Later when a Missionary came to Sutton, we went to church there. The trip was not fast, because our oxen took their time.

In the winter we burned corn stalks, tumbling weeds and ox chips to keep warm. Later on we always had some coal in the winter.

The people were pretty sensible in the early days. Of course some had peculiar ideas about the Northern Lights which were seen every fall and spring. They were much greater then, than they are now. People couldn't explain the cause of the Northern Lights. Some were afraid of them. They thought that changes were going on in the world. Some said

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they meant better times. Others thought they meant worse times. Some thought that the world might come to an end. Others thought that there were ghosts behind those lights. Some people were really afraid of something, they really didn't /know what.

These Northern Lights always reminded me of the time when there was a full eclipse of the sun when we [?] were in Illinois. It got dark during the day and the stars began to shine. The chickens went into the house to roost and we lit our lamp. We couldn't make out why it got so dark. In a short time it got bright again. When we realized that we had an eclipse of the sun. I have never forgotten it, although I was a small child then."